

# UPDATE

VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF EMERGENCY SERVICES

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## Stafford County develops "ERCAT"

**W**hen disaster strikes, citizens get on the phone. They want information, but — while every citizen's question is important — their calls tie up desperately needed 911 lines. How does your communications center handle this overload of non-emergency 911 calls? If you answered, "We're still trying to get a grip on the situation," you're not alone.

You might want to examine a creative program developed by Stafford County called the Emergency Response Citizen Assistance Team (ERCAT). The program was developed, in part, because of lessons learned during last year's Local Emergency Management Exercise.

"We realized then that we had no way to field citizens' inquiries during a disaster," said Emergency Medical Services Supervisor Cecilia Causey. "The 911 dispatchers are overwhelmed and have neither the time nor the resources to handle calls from citizens looking for information."

To make it happen, the county's Department of Emergency Management teamed up with the Citizen Assistance Office. As part of its duties, this office trains volunteers to staff various positions within the county's administrative complex. The group called upon the expertise of the office's coordinator, Natalie Davis, to plan a training program for the ERCAT team.

By tapping into the county's growing population of retirees as well as into the volunteer pool at hand, 25 team members were recruited. "Our current volunteers had already proven their abilities in terms of responding to citizen inquiries," said Davis. "We wanted to recruit additional people who could do the job well and who would not be constrained by job and

family obligations."

A conference room was converted into a response center and hooked up with the county's EOC through video monitors and fax machines. During an event, a "disaster help-line" is established and the number publicized through the local media. The ERCAT team serves as a kind of "information clearinghouse"



for the county's citizens by answering questions, controlling rumors, escorting visitors and performing other public information duties as needed.

The emergency management department created a resources manual to assist team members with answering the types of questions the public may ask. The book includes information such as shelter locations, disaster supply needs, critical telephone numbers and other items.

Emergency Services Coordinator Fred Vanous emphasized the partnership aspects of the program. "This is a cooperative effort between our citizens and our local government to enhance public safety," he said. "The program is efficient, cost effective and has worked so well for us, we have included it in our Emergency Operations Plan."

How did they keep these volunteers motivated? "We work to keep them involved through social gatherings, drills and mock call-ups," said Causey. "They're highly motivated. They know what the program is about, they want to learn and they want to be involved in their community."

County Administrator C.M. Williams

observed, "This unique program allows us to tap into the 'people' skills of a pool of volunteers who would not necessarily be able to work for the traditional fire and rescue response programs. Through this program, they are able to play an integral part during our response to emergencies and disasters."

For more information, call Natalie Davis at 540/720-4516 or Captain Cecilia Causey at 540/659-8685.

## VDES Internet site expands

Communicate with the world! The VDES web page features a new "Virginia Emergency Manager Directory" link that provides the names and e-mail addresses of VDES staff, hazmat officers and local emergency managers. The e-mail links are active, which means you can go to the site and send your correspondence with a click of your mouse. We are working to include everyone in this useful directory. If you want to be listed on the "Virginia Emergency Manager Directory" site, send your name, job title and e-mail address to: [jclemons.des@state.va.us](mailto:jclemons.des@state.va.us)

We're also seeking to expand our "Virginia Links" site. If your fire department or emergency services office has a homepage, provide us with the direct-access URL address and we'll create the link in our directory. E-mail us with the name of your organization and its homepage Internet address.

# The General Assembly wraps up for 1997

**D**uring this year's session of the General Assembly, some bills that were signed into law by Governor Allen include:

**HB 2670:** The "Crouch Bill" proposes the establishment of a Virginia Emergency and Disaster Relief Program. The program would provide state assistance to localities declared disaster areas by the Governor, but not approved for federal financial assistance. This bill goes into effect July 1.

**HJR 446:** This House Resolution requests the Department of Conservation

and Recreation to conduct a field study of the structural condition of dams owned by soil and water conservation districts. The intent of the study is to determine the integrity of the structure as it relates to dam safety. If appropriate, the department can recommend the installation of the IFLOWS system as well.

**SB 678:** This bill allows localities to enforce the removal of abandoned vehicles and vehicles involved in accidents. The concept behind this is to give localities legal power to keep roadways clear

for emergency vehicles. The bill goes into effect July 1.

**SJR 233:** This resolution expresses the support of the General Assembly regarding the development and implementation of a highway incident management system. The system will be developed and adopted in conjunction with VDOT, the Virginia State Police, VDES, and other organizations.

**SB 1070:** This bill extends the presumptions for work-related "death or disability from respiratory disease, hypertension or heart disease" under workers' compensation to

VDES Hazmat Officers. The bill goes into effect July 1.

In other budget-related items, the legislature approved the use of \$620,000 from the Flood Prevention and Protection Assistance Fund for Flood Mitigation Projects as determined by VDES.

In addition, the Civil Air Patrol received \$120,000; part of which will be used to purchase emergency communications equipment and a portion of which will go to VDES-sponsored search and rescue training.

For information, call George Urquhart at 804/674-2448.

## NWS offices continue with services

**T**he ongoing debate over the National Weather Service (NWS) budget cuts has emergency services professionals worried about the possible impact these reductions may have on public safety. Although NWS officials have stressed that the cutbacks won't affect public safety, this viewpoint has been contested within the weather service's own ranks, according to information from the National Emergency Management Association (NEMA).

The proposed cuts were ordered to close a \$27 million budget gap and included elimination of the Southern Region Headquarters Office in Fort Worth, Texas, and staff reductions for the National Hurricane Center in Miami, the National Storm Prediction Center in Oklahoma and the Aviation Prediction Center in Kansas City. Nearly 200 jobs were either cut or left vacant.

In the past two weeks, about \$715,000 has been returned to the NWS budget to maintain

last year's level of effort at the national prediction centers. Of the 11 positions that were cut at the national prediction centers, says NEMA, four to six are being restored at the National Hurricane Center and two at the Storm Prediction Center. These positions have been restored until the end of the 1997 hurricane season. At that time, NOAA will evaluate the needs of the National Hurricane Center and the other national centers to determine future staffing levels.

"It's really hard to look in the 'crystal ball,' but if Congress funds close to what the Clinton administration requested for fiscal year 1998, then we should be alright," said Bill Sammler, warning coordination meteorologist with the Wakefield Forecast Office. "We're not really sure at this point how we're going to be affected down the road — but the thought is — we'll probably be OK."

According to Sammler, the primary impact the budget cuts

have had in Virginia is that the toll-free numbers used by the public for weather forecast information have been eliminated at the Wakefield, Sterling and Blacksburg offices. However, emergency managers can still use the toll-free "spotter" numbers as well as the alternate non-800 numbers during a severe weather event.

Plans are still in place to eliminate the Fort Worth regional headquarters, but the impact will be primarily administrative, according to Sammler. "In Virginia, we expect the level of service we have provided in the past to continue," said Sammler. "In terms of our day-to-day operations, there will be no impact. We don't plan to cut our hours and emergency services managers will still be able to coordinate with us during any sort of weather event. There won't be any change in how we interact with the local coordinators."

## NCCEM adds new credential

Responding to the needs of its membership, the National Coordinating Council on Emergency Management (NCCEM) has added a new credential to its Certified Emergency Management Program. The Associated Emergency Manager credential requires the same qualifications as the CEM but provides those who don't have college degrees the opportunity to have their experiences and achievements recognized.

The NCCEM program to credential emergency services people is a joint effort with FEMA to increase the visibility and professional credibility of the emergency services career field. For more information about this new program, call NCCEM headquarters at 703/538-1795 or e-mail at [NCCEM@aol.com](mailto:NCCEM@aol.com)

# HAZ MAT



## Recycling tires is effective tactic

*In last month's issue, Virginia's "tire pile" problem was discussed. This month, possible remediation tactics are introduced.*

**T**he state has a tire tax that funds the waste tire disposal program managed by Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ). To give teeth to enforcement, the General Assembly passed a law in 1995 that makes the storage of over 500 waste tires on a property a Class Six felony. In addition, several localities have developed ordinances that reflect and reinforce the state law.

"If a locality has tire piles, we work with them to find the easiest and safest way to get rid of the tires," said Certified Hazmat Manager and DEQ Analytical Chemist, John Conover. "Tire piles are an extreme public safety hazard if they catch fire, particularly for the first responder. Part of what I do when I go into a locality is help their fire chief develop a Hazardous Prevention Plan. The purpose of this plan is to identify the potential problems associated with the tire piles and to make plans to remediate the problem."

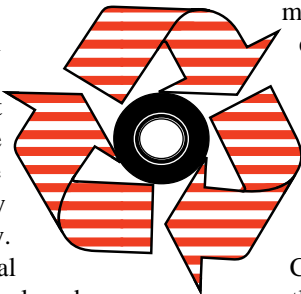
The plan covers removal schemes, proposes methods to fight a possible fire, develops a fire notification strategy and

identifies nearby property owners and special populations, such as hospitals, nursing homes and day care facilities, which may need to be evacuated in the event of a fire.

Although recycling tires is still expensive at this point, waste tires can be put to many uses. A good example of a successful remediation project occurred in King George County. DEQ and King George County officials are currently involved in cleaning up a tire pile site that, at one point, covered about 14 acres and contained approximately 5 to 8 million tires.

The county resourcefully contracted with a tire recycling company which worked on site to collect and compress the tires into one-ton, wire-wrapped bales. These were used to form part of a system of lagoons to filter waste runoff at a North Carolina hog farm. The remaining tires are being shredded for use as an alternate daily cover in a nearby landfill.

Other recycling methods include the use of tire chips or crumb rubber as a base for playgrounds, running tracks, training tracks for race horses, drain fields for septic systems, (Continued at top of page)



blasting mats for sound and debris control, drainage layers, rubber products, mulch and soaker hoses. Controlled burning of tires, a process called pyrolysis, produces oil and scrap iron.

"Because VDES would be the lead agency in the event of a large-scale tire fire, we have worked with DEQ to plan and prepare for such an event," said Acting Hazardous Materials Field Manager Greg Britt. "If a locality needs assistance regarding this issue, we can provide technical information, planning

assistance and other kinds of support."

Conover observed, "The situation has improved at this point. For example, we have cleaned up 60 tire piles in the Piedmont area alone in the past year and a half. This improvement is due, in part, to increased public awareness and better laws."

For information on the waste tire disposal program, call DEQ's Alan Lassiter at 804/698-4215. For technical advice or planning assistance, call Greg Britt at 804/674-2406.

## Workshop assists with PA process

**T**he money is out there but getting to it is the challenge. To help your local government recover after a disaster, a number of federal and state programs are available.

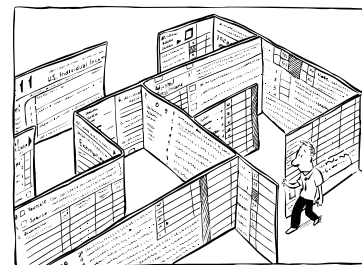
However, to get the appropriate amount of public assistance funding, you need to know how to prepare the necessary documentation required by the state and FEMA. There is a systematic way to navigate through this paperwork maze.

VDES is conducting informal workshops to assist

you with setting up a system that identifies and tracks damage and accounts for repair and replacement costs. The system is designed to use the resources you have available as well as work within your locality's laws. You'll get the

lowdown from the state and federal level and you and your staff will have the opportunity to develop a program that works for you.

The best part is the workshop is held in your locality at a time and place convenient for you. Call Bob Andersen at 804/674-2463 for information.



## Thought for the month

**T**he manager administers, the leader innovates.  
The manager maintains, the leader develops.  
The manager relies on systems, the leader relies on people.  
The manager counts on controls, the leader counts on trust.  
The manager does things right, the leader does the right thing.

(Fortune magazine)

# TRAINING



## Coordinators' Briefing

May 13-14  
Wytheville

## Disaster Recovery Operations

May 21-23  
Wytheville

## Overview of Incident Command System

June 3  
Dublin

## Incident Command System/ Emergency Operations Center Interface

June 4-5  
Dublin

## EOC Management and Operations

June 10-12  
Roanoke

## Exercise Design

June 18-19  
Salem

## Professional Development: Leadership and Influence

July 8-10  
Richmond

## Professional Development: Decision Making and Problem Solving

July 11  
Richmond

For information, call the VDES  
Training Office at 804/674-2458

## Technological Hazards Division

### Chemistry of Hazardous Materials

May 12-23  
Chesterfield

### Hazardous Materials Incident Management

Roanoke  
May 19-21

### Public Safety Response to Terrorism

May 28  
Alexandria

June 11  
Williamsburg

July 16  
Charlottesville

August 13  
Roanoke

For information, call the  
VDES Tech Haz Division  
at 804/674-2510

### Cameo Training Workshop

May 12-13  
Salem

### Hospital Emergency Room Decontamination Class

May 23  
Salem

For information, call George  
Roarty at 804/674-2708



### Establishing a Family Assistance Center Following a Mass Fatality

May 5  
2:30-4:30 p.m.

After an incident involving mass fatalities, how do you deal with the families of the victims? This broadcast covers the reasons why a Family Assistance Center is important and reviews the logistics involved in setting one up. Presenters reinforce their points by discussing the use of this resource after the Oklahoma City bombing. Finally, a representative from the National Transportation Safety Board will talk about how this organization works with Family Assistance Centers following transportation accidents.

### National Alert Broadcast

May 21  
2:00-3:30 p.m.

This broadcast offers training features, FEMA updates and a segment for first responders that is provided monthly by the Virginia Beach Fire Department. In time for the upcoming season, May's broadcast spotlights hurricanes.

For satellite coordinates or further information, call 800/527-4893, 301/447-1068 or e-mail [sue.downin@fema.gov](mailto:sue.downin@fema.gov)

## NASAR Conference

Response '97  
NASAR Conference  
May 28-31  
Richmond  
For information, call  
NASAR at 703/222-6277

## EAS site for information

For detailed information on the Emergency Alert System which replaced the Emergency Broadcasting System Jan. 1, visit this web site: <http://www.eas.net/index.html>



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